

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides recommendations based on the goals and objectives presented in Chapter 1, the railroad needs and concerns presented in Chapter 4 and other issues and concerns discussed within the Plan.

The following four goals were established as part of the *2002 Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan* development process:

- Work to preserve the existing rail system to the extent the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet can influence the largely privately owned and operated Kentucky rail system.
- Support economic development by providing Kentucky's rail system connectivity to the national rail system and Kentucky's transportation system.
- Strengthen customer relationships with the rail industry through coordination and cooperation in the transportation planning process.
- Enhance rail transportation safety and convenience to ensure mobility and access.

The following discussion will address each in greater detail, providing an action plan to better define KYTC's position on rail and its role in promoting rail. As stated in Chapter 1, Kentucky currently does not have a source of funding to implement specific rail improvement projects. As a result, recommendations generally refer to policy and program activities and not capital project activities.

I. GOAL: PROMOTE RAIL SYSTEM PRESERVATION

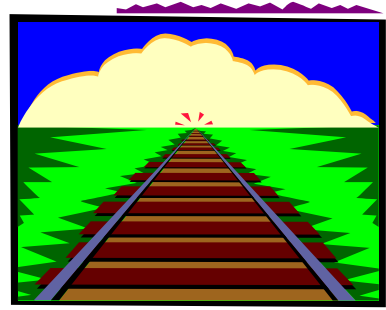
Rail is one of four key modes used for freight transportation. With increasing capacity constraints on each of these four modes (railroads, water ports, airports and highways), it is important to preserve the existing rail system to provide a viable alternative for the transport of freight. Michael J. Connor, Ohio Central Railroad vice president, noted in an article written by Fred D. Baldwin¹ that: "multimodal transportation systems can improve the quality of community life by improving safety, minimizing environmental concerns and reducing the required maintenance on the local, state and federal highway systems. Furthermore, Mr. Baldwin pointed out the value of existing track and abandoned rights-of-way. Large capital costs associated with acquiring land and laying track were noted as a key reason for discouraging the abandonment of rail lines and selling off the right-of-way for nonrail uses." Mr. Baldwin pointed out that many of the short lines operating today are operating on track once considered "worthless."

To support the goal of rail system preservation, the following actions are encouraged to 1) assist in preserving rail service and rights-of-way and 2) coordinate the on-going maintenance of system information.

¹ Baldwin, Fred D. "Short Line Railroads: Local Lifelines for Business", *Appalachia*, Volume 34, No. 2: May-August 2001.

A. Action: Assist in Preserving Rail Service and Rights-of-Way

The KYTC should work to coordinate initiatives that will help preserve rail service, where in the public interest, and rights-of-way, where service preservation is not possible. A line no longer cost effective for a large Class I railroad may serve as a potential profit generator for a small short line rail shipper able to serve the local needs of a community. A large majority of the current short line railroads were developed in this way. If local economics do not warrant continued service on the line, other options exist. The line can be rail banked, providing temporary use to other service providers such as a tourist/recreational rail line or rails to trails recreational line. Since experience indicates that it is difficult to reacquire abandoned right-of-way it is important that local communities, along with regional and state governments, develop procedures to retain rail service or right-of-way.



As part of this plan development, federal funding sources have been identified and described, including the RRIF, TCSP, Highway Rail Grade Crossing, Transportation Enhancements, and CMAQ programs. With federal and state regulations and/or funding programs regularly changing, the KYTC should maintain a current knowledge of available public funding that can be used for rail projects. With accurate information and a strong understanding of rail project funding opportunities, the KYTC will be in a better position to assist railroads, as well as local industry and communities, in preserving and enhancing the existing rail system.

B. Action: Coordinate Maintenance of System Information

A key element in helping to preserve the existing rail system is to maintain current knowledge of the Commonwealth's rail system and its components. It is this element in which the KYTC can serve a more central and direct role. To facilitate this need, the Commonwealth of Kentucky adopted 603 KAR 7:090, which establishes procedures requiring all railroads to submit the following information to the KYTC:

- Annual report and/or a completed copy of the State Statistics form provided by the KYTC;
- Map of all active routes;
- Written notice of abandonment; and,
- Accident reports for any accident resulting in a loss of life.

Procedural mechanisms should be maintained, or further developed, to strengthen and ensure the consistency of this reporting program. These procedures should include regular notices by KYTC to the reporting entities on the requirements and deadlines for providing information and immediate feedback when information is incomplete. Additionally, a summary report of the collective results of this information should be developed on an annual basis,

whereby the reporting entities can see the application of the information they provide. This summary report should include the adoption, continued development and updating of an official state rail map that identifies track ownership, operating rights and proposed abandonments. This would provide a key tool to update the information assembled as part of this current state rail plan effort.

With this action, the KYTC can continue to ensure the accurate collection and maintenance of this data to better facilitate future updates of the *Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan* and other programming efforts the KYTC may pursue. With accurate and up-to-date data, the KYTC will be better equipped to continue to address the rail industry's needs and concerns.

II. GOAL: SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a common goal across Kentucky. Economic development, particularly as related to rail industry issues, is closely tied to the needs and initiatives that extend beyond the border of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. To be successful, many economic development initiatives involving rail system development and utilization must be coordinated with jurisdictions throughout the United States.

As such, the goal of promoting economic development will require action on different levels, ranging from local to national involvement.

A. Action: Provide Coordination with Local and State Agencies

Understanding that the implementation of identified projects generally must be privately or privately/publicly funded initiatives, the KYTC cannot directly provide the funding sources for these projects. More important, the KYTC can act as one of several critical points of coordination between the private and public sectors involved in the funding process. In addition, the KYTC can provide an important source of technical assistance to involved agencies, helping to assess the logistical viability and costs for implementing rail development initiatives that may be under consideration.

Coordination and communication is the first step in this process and KYTC, along with other state agencies and the railroads, should continue to routinely organize for the purpose of addressing rail service needs related to economic development initiatives. These rail service needs largely involve industrial rail service requirements or initiatives related to recreational rail service opportunities. With responsibilities for Kentucky's transportation system the KYTC is a central player in these efforts.

Other state and local partners play important roles in these initiatives. For example, the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development works to support business and industrial development within the Commonwealth of Kentucky and maintains a database of information on existing and proposed industrial developments. In addition, this Cabinet works with local and regional interests to help secure grants and funding for economic development projects.

Another example is the Kentucky Department for Tourism. They are a state partner that can be called upon for coordination on needs and opportunities as

they relate to the development and operation of recreational rail lines or rail trails. This department also works with state and local entities to seek funding opportunities and matching grants that serve to develop tourism-related initiatives and then to promote these attractions throughout the state.

B. Provide Technical Assistance to Local and State Agencies

Technical assistance is another key element whereby the KYTC can work to support economic development needs and opportunities. Areas of technical assistance could include the following:

- Assessing Cost and Feasibility of Proposed Initiatives
- Identifying Rail Service Needs
 - Relative to Intermodal Facilities
 - Relative to State Transportation Plan Goals and Objectives

In maintaining information on the state's rail system and having staff resources with expertise in the field, the KYTC could be called upon to conduct analysis of rail service proposals, particularly the cost and feasibility of implementing such proposals. The KYTC can also work to evaluate existing access deficiencies for intermodal facilities that lack sufficient rail access but have the potential justification for being rail-served. Rail system initiatives related to broader state transportation planning objectives and multimodal system development can be identified and evaluated.

C. Action: Participation in National Initiatives

Outside Kentucky, both nationally and globally, rail-related economic development goals are similar. Where rail is concerned, the longer the trip, the greater the economic advantage over truck freight transport. With this in mind, the KYTC should continue to work in partnership with neighboring states to develop initiatives that promote connectivity to the national rail system and the global market place. A rail project not considered feasible for Kentucky alone may prove to be feasible if the project scope is expanded to include other partnering states. As an example, the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the KYTC have been active participants in regional initiatives, such as the *Latin America Trade and Transportation Study*, whose goal is to “support economic development through improved transportation for trade.”

Another example of a similar project being conducted in the Western United States which exemplifies multistate cooperation is the *Western Trade and Transportation Network Study*. This is a multistate freight initiative, intended to:

- Identify the high-priority freight multimodal corridors and intermodal facilities throughout the western United States;
- Assess the performance of each corridor and facility from the freight perspective; and
- Coordinate a regional approach to identifying and addressing freight transportation needs for these multimodal corridors and facilities.

III. GOAL: STRENGTHEN CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

As part of the 2002 *Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan*, a variety of public and private partners were instrumental in the program planning and development process. These included representatives from the KRA, Department for Local Governments, MPOs, ADDs, Operation Lifesaver, and KBT Rail Committee among others. For any transportation initiative to be successful, the effective involvement of these customers and/or other program partners is required.

A. Action: Involvement of Rail Industry Partners

The development of the *Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan* has included active participation by representatives of Kentucky's rail industry. Having strengthened these relationships through this effort, the KYTC should maintain this working relationship by regularly involving these groups in future planning processes. For example, the KRA is an organization comprised of railroad representatives from across the Commonwealth. The KRA meets quarterly to discuss railroad issues that impact Kentucky's rail carriers. With permission from the KRA, the KYTC should attend at least one meeting per year. This would provide the KYTC an opportunity to present the railroad summary information to the KRA and discuss with the group the latest developments associated with Kentucky's rail system. The Kentuckians for Better Transportation Rail Committee is another committee with which the KYTC should maintain regular involvement. This committee meets on an as-needed basis to discuss transportation concerns as they impact the rail system. As with the KRA, the KYTC should periodically attend KBT meetings to keep intact the line of communication.

B. Action: Involvement of MPO and ADDs

The Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Area Development Districts throughout Kentucky are routinely involved with the KYTC in transportation planning and programming efforts. MPOs and ADDs participate with the KYTC as part of the statewide transportation planning process to recommend local transportation improvement projects. Examples include the Unscheduled Needs List and MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and Long Range Transportation Plans.

Oftentimes, rail-specific projects are not always identified or fail to be prioritized relative to the highway projects identified in these documents. The KYTC should formalize a process to encourage MPOs, ADDs and other planning organizations to specifically address rail issues as part of their pre-established reporting procedures. In other words, additional reporting requirements are not required for this action. Instead, building in a focus on rail projects and issues as part of the current reporting programs should be sufficient. For instance, the identification of a separate set of rail-specific projects should be encouraged. If these projects are reported separately, these local and regional planning agencies will be more prone to identifying them. Particular attention should be

given to rail projects that serve to reduce the demands on public resources, improve safety, and increase efficiency for the overall transportation system.

The *Drive Smart* program is another activity in which the KYTC works with local ADDs to identify critical accident areas and safety needs. Similar to the above discussion, efforts should be included in this program to give particular attention to rail safety needs as they relate to rail-highway grade crossings. This effort should also be coordinated with the *Operation Lifesaver* program discussed below.

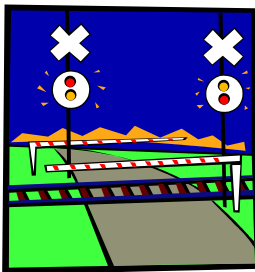
C. Action: Involvement with Operation Lifesaver

Operation Lifesaver is a nationwide, non-profit organization dedicated to ending collisions, deaths, and injuries at highway-rail intersections and along railroad rights-of-way. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet should explore options to promote Operation Lifesaver and other transportation safety programs. The KYTC should consider looking for set-aside funding to provide monetary support to these organizations. This would allow Operation Lifesaver or similar programs to expand their educational activities. One small example would be to purchase additional brochure materials currently available through Operation Lifesaver, Drive Smart, etc., to be distributed at KYTC public meetings.

IV. GOAL: ENHANCE RAIL SYSTEM SAFETY AND CONVENIENCE

Enhancing rail transportation safety and the system's convenience for ensuring mobility and access is a goal that is consistent with other transportation modes and systems throughout the state. Rail safety issues include both accident areas and security measures. Mobility and access needs include both freight and passenger service opportunities. The following action items discuss initiatives in these areas.

A. Action: Actively Address Rail Safety/Accident Issues



Relative to accident areas, at-grade highway-rail crossings are both operational and safety concerns for both railroads and vehicular traffic. Highway-rail grade crossing projects are regularly identified as justifiable safety improvements by the KYTC, railroad industry and local governments. At current funding levels, the Kentucky Grade Crossing Program addresses eight to ten such improvements each year. While maintaining the flexibility to address specific locations throughout the state, consideration should also be given to a corridor-level approach to establish priorities for consideration in future initiatives to address highway-rail grade crossing safety. These priority corridors may include routes with existing or proposed passenger service, higher speeds, heavier traffic or the highest historic probability of crossing incidents. Potential corridors could include:

- Norfolk Southern Line in Boone, Kenton and Grant Counties (historic instances of crossing incidents);
- CSXT Line from Ashland to Northern Kentucky (Amtrak passenger service);

- Illinois Central Line south of Paducah (Amtrak passenger service); and
- CSXT Line from Louisville to Nashville, Tennessee (proposed Amtrak passenger service).

As part of this program, the KYTC should consider formalizing a methodology for identifying and prioritizing deficient highway-rail grade crossings. This would provide a consistent procedure to conduct larger corridor studies as proposed above, and more importantly provide other agencies and local governments the tools to evaluate highway-rail crossings on an individual or grouped basis.

This overall approach provides an opportunity to address the upgrade and consolidation of crossings on an individual and corridor basis and make efficient use of available funds. It does not need to impact the current Kentucky Grade Crossing Program, but instead complement this program by providing additional means to improve more crossings than the current program addresses. In undertaking this new approach, the KYTC would act as a coordination point to encourage communication between the involved railroad, government agencies and public and to administer funding for identified improvements, as it becomes available.

In addition to the above corridors, potential quiet zone corridors could be identified and evaluated. Intended for communities to provide options to replace sounding of locomotive horns, quiet zone studies could be conducted by communities willing to work with local railroads and government officials to upgrade and consolidate highway-rail grade crossings. As discussed in Chapter 5, certain FRA requirements must be met for a corridor to be considered an approved quiet zone. Upon meeting these requirements, the subject community can provide their residents a quieter and safer transportation network. The KYTC would work with local communities to support coordination efforts between the involved railroad, government agencies and public, encourage buy-in by all involved parties to fund the program, and administer additional funding for the project, if it becomes available.

B. Action: Address Rail Security Measures

The importance of security for Kentucky's rail system has been heightened with national concerns related to terrorism and transportation security. With such national emphasis comes funding opportunities that could be leveraged to address these issues within the state. Security enhancement initiatives could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Closed circuit television cameras, vehicle barriers, lighting and fencing
- Employee identification systems
- Passenger information retrieval system
- Train locator and tracking systems, notification systems and mail, and express tracking systems
- Additional security personnel

- Screening equipment
- Communication equipment

Similar proposals should be considered for freight railroads. These proposals could address some of the same items above, as well as discuss the need to safely and securely transport hazardous materials on the nation's rail system.

C. Action: Improve System Convenience through Access and Mobility

A multimodal transportation system offering a variety of services is desired for the effective movement of commodities and people. Kentucky's economy is dependent on the complete value-added supply chain and therefore is dependent on all mode choices. Utilizing available resources, such as the intermodal facilities database maintained by the Kentucky Transportation Center, the KYTC should identify rail-related intermodal opportunities or opportunities for rail to provide an effective alternative transportation choice.



The KYTC has previously undertaken study efforts that identified access needs and opportunities at existing transportation facilities.

Examples include *the Kentucky Water Transportation Corridors: Public Riverport Development and Intermodal Access Study*, *Statewide Aviation System Plan*, *Kentucky Appalachian Regional Intermodal Airpark Study*, and the *Final Summary Report on "Truck Route Access Evaluation," Freight Movement Intermodal Access in Kentucky*. These studies looked at public riverports, statewide airports, Appalachian regional airports, and truck generating facilities to evaluate facility concerns and identify capital improvement needs. A similar study effort should be pursued for rail intermodal facilities. This study would evaluate access to existing facilities by each transportation mode, assess the need for additional access, and identify capital improvements. In addition, as part of this study or through a truck diversion study, the need for new intermodal facilities within Kentucky could be evaluated.

One point of emphasis would be to reduce truck traffic along Kentucky's interstate corridors. An example diversion study effort is the *Feasibility of Diverting I-81 Truck Traffic to Rail Study* conducted for the Commonwealth of Virginia². This study evaluated the potential to divert truck traffic from I-81 to the Norfolk Southern railroad. Norfolk Southern and the Commonwealth of Virginia wanted to evaluate the feasibility for double tracking the NS line instead of adding additional lanes to I-81. Initial findings showed that the potential for significant public benefit exists, but the study recommended further analysis by the Commonwealth of Virginia on the potential to divert highway traffic to rail transportation. In a similar approach, the KYTC should consider options to explore the state's unique rail diversion opportunities, working with neighboring states and understanding the long transport distance typically required to make

² Wilbur Smith Associates in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Transportation. *Senate Joint Resolution No. 55 – Feasibility of Diverting I-81 Truck Traffic to Rail Study*, 2001.

these projects feasible. Two examples could be the heavily traveled I-65 and I-75 Interstate Corridors.

There are also many unknowns related to the future of passenger rail transportation, and the KYTC is closely following and proactively participating in this evolving situation. The KYTC could identify and evaluate, where justifiable, passenger rail transportation, particularly in the metropolitan areas, and identify opportunities to improve connections to other passenger modes of transportation. The KYTC could work with local governments to ensure connectivity between the proposed Midwest Regional Rail System, commuter rail service and other passenger transportation services.

The KYTC could also identify other metropolitan areas with the potential to support passenger service. With commuter rail service proposed in Louisville and Northern Kentucky, these areas provide a starting point. Examination of current and proposed passenger initiatives omit the metropolitan area of Lexington from consideration. One opportunity for future passenger service may be extending current service from Louisville or Cincinnati to Lexington. If the opportunity to utilize existing CSXT or NS track was available, this route may be warranted. Although the *Examination of I-75, I-64 and I-71 High Speed Rail Corridors Study* found high speed rail not feasible between the metropolitan areas of Louisville, Lexington and Cincinnati, this does not mean high speed rail or other forms of commuter service could not be feasible at a later date or under a varied project scope. The KYTC, in an effort to identify and evaluate rail passenger service opportunities, should monitor significant changes in the passenger rail service area.